

Ronald Baatz: Every Winter

VERTICAL PERCHES

while she's upstairs taking a morning bath
i walk into town to the deli, and knowing
how long she can take bathing i'm in no hurry
to return to her house. at the deli
i take a newspaper and a coffee and sit at one
of the tables in the rear. i open the newspaper
to the sports section, which is always my appetizer
when it comes to making my way through the other
sections. usually this is a gathering place for many
carpenters and plumbers in the morning, but today
there are only two men at a table in a corner, perhaps
because it is a sunday and most men are home with
their families. i cannot tell what they are talking
about, for the most part, but i certainly can tell what
they are eating: the aroma of egg sandwiches is damn
near overwhelming, to the point where i'm tempted to
order one for myself. i resist, though, expected as
i am to have breakfast with haldora. she is big on
sunday breakfast, and in all likelihood what she'll
prepare will be far more ambitious than a mere egg
sandwich. autumn has come to a rapid conclusion, what
with the intense rains and treacherous winds
this past week sweeping trees clean of remaining
leaves. out the back window of the deli i can see
the towering bare branches of the poplar trees, which
when in leaf easily hide the house situated on the other
side of them. by the way their branches all point
directly up towards the sky, you'd think the birds
would find them unsuitable branches, but as i sip
the first sip of my coffee i see many sparrows
using these branches to come to rest on.
the older of the two men, whose facial expression
seems to have been totally defeated by the forces
of gravity, is reading the obituaries, and in a loud,
laughing voice he remarks that people are dying
to get their names in the newspaper. the other man
makes no response to this, probably because this
same old man makes this same observation every
sunday morning. then, after a brief pause,
the old man squeezes some ketchup onto his egg
sandwich, and with that the other man suddenly
grunts in agreement, as he turns his eyes upwards
to look out at the sparrows
mysteriously continuing to choose
vertical perches.

